



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Mailing Address: PO Box 43200
Olympia, Washington 98504-3200
Phone (360) 902-2200
www.wdfw.wa.gov



NORTHWEST INDIAN FISHERIES COMMISSION
6730 Martin Way East
Olympia, Washington 98516-5540
Phone (360) 438-1180
www.nwifc.org

October 16, 2019

House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
1522 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock,

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission has come together with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to express our unified support for H.R. 3742 - Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA). This is a moment of historical significance for the state and tribes, and it is a testament to the importance of our request to pass RAWA.

Washington State is home to more than 1,900 species of animals, including at least 40 that are found nowhere else on earth. Fish and wildlife are deeply interwoven into the cultural and economic fabric of both Washington and tribal citizens. Our quality of life, outdoor traditions, and prosperity are tied to the health and sustainability of our natural heritage. The treaty tribes and the state of Washington actively co-manage many of these collective resources. We often collaborate on population surveys, management plans, disease studies and habitat projects in an effort to ensure healthy sustaining populations of fish, flora and fauna for generations to come. Yet, despite our best efforts to pool resources and form unique partnerships, we face common problems that are putting huge numbers of species at risk of becoming endangered.

In Washington alone, we have 268 species and 30 habitats of greatest conservation need. Nationally, one-third of all U.S. wildlife species are already imperiled or are vulnerable—and nearly one million species worldwide are at risk of extinction. States and tribes need adequate and stable resources to carry out our protection, conservation and restoration work. RAWA provides a unique opportunity to fill this perpetual void. The bipartisan bill provides states and tribes with dedicated and sustainable funding to protect and restore our most vulnerable species to ensure their long-term persistence on the landscape.

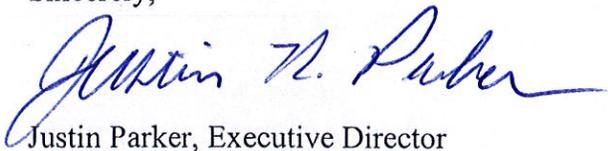
For states, the bill would replace State Wildlife Grants and redirect \$1.3 billion from the treasury to be dedicated to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program, an authorized subaccount under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program. States would use these funds to implement their congressionally required State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP) — proactive,

comprehensive conservation strategies tailored to Washington and developed with participation from the public. Through the full implementation of their SWAPs, states will work to prevent fish and wildlife from becoming endangered and enhance the outdoor benefits that millions of Americans enjoy. Working closely with tribes, local government, business and conservation partners here in Washington, we envision directing the state's allocation of \$24 million (of the \$1.3 billion) towards conservation, outdoor recreation and education programs that will dramatically improve the state's ability to successfully maintain thriving human communities and healthy wildlife populations.

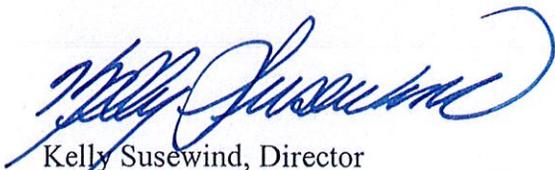
RAWA would also redirect from the treasury \$97.5 million to be dedicated to the Tribal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account and distributed through a Department of the Interior allocation process to be developed in consultation with tribes. These resources are essential for tribes to manage wildlife and habitat on their lands as well as collaborate across jurisdictions to protect migrating wildlife; assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species; manage, control and prevent invasive species and diseases; and to ensure that tribes have the staff capacity to do all they can do to protect wildlife. For the tribes, protecting and conserving wildlife is about preserving culture and traditions for future generations. It is also about ensuring that tribes can continue to fish, gather, and hunt, as reserved by the treaties, to provide access to traditional foods, economic opportunities, and ultimately a way of life. However, tribes need long-term dedicated resources to accomplish these goals, and RAWA represents one of the most significant opportunities to provide some of that support. That is why the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) – a nonprofit organization representing 57 Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, southeast Alaska, Northern California and Western Montana – recently passed a resolution calling on Congress to support and pass RAWA (see enclosed).

As individual sovereigns, Washington and the tribes do not often under take joint correspondence. However, in this instance we wanted to demonstrate that RAWA is fundamentally about collaboration and partnerships to protect and conserve our collective wildlife resources. To that end we have come together to jointly respectfully request support and timely passage of Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

Sincerely,



Justin Parker, Executive Director
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission



Kelly Susewind, Director
Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

House Natural Resources Subcommittee

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Enclosure: ATNI Resolution Calling on Congress to Support RAWA

cc: Congresswoman Suzan DelBene
 Congressman Rick Larsen
 Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler
 Congressman Dan Newhouse
 Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
 Congressman Derek Kilmer
 Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal
 Congresswoman Kim Schrier, MD
 Congressman Adam Smith
 Congressman Denny Heck



2019 Annual Convention Suquamish, Washington

RESOLUTION # 19 - 52

“CALLING FOR SUPPORT AND PASSAGE OF RECOVERING AMERICA’S WILDLIFE ACT WITH A TRIBAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION ACCOUNT”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians; and

WHEREAS, as indigenous peoples, we honor in all ways our relation to Creation and in that spirit acknowledge a sacred obligation to ensure all our relations are treated in a dignified manner that reflects our tribal cultural values passed down since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, our ATNI youth leaders recognize that our salmon, traditional foods and resources need bold action in order to sustain our families and future generations for as long as the rivers flow; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government has the trust responsibility to protect our fish and wildlife for future generations; and

WHEREAS, tribes have been wildlife managers since time-immemorial and now many tribal governments operate fish and wildlife programs, promote conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife, and regulate hunting and fishing within their traditional lands and areas; and

WHEREAS, tribes collaborate, co-manage, or partner with states on the conservation and recovery of fish and wildlife, but do not receive sufficient federal funding to protect and restore these species; and

WHEREAS, proactive tribal engagement in wildlife management is necessary to conserve, protect and restore wildlife resources and prevent the demise of species to the point of requiring listing under the federal Endangered Species Act; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls on Congress to support and pass Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) with the inclusion of a tribal fish and wildlife conservation and restoration account that provides long-term, dedicated, and stable funding for tribes in addition to a state account for tribal wildlife management created under RAWA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI respectfully requests that the legislation ensure a minimum of \$97.5 million as an annual allocation for tribal fish and wildlife programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI supports Congressional direction to the federal government to ensure consultation with tribes on the development of an allocation process for distribution of these funds; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2019 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort, Suquamish, Washington on October 7-10, 2019, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary